

MEDITATIONS

(18)

UPON

M^r Baxter's

Review of *His* Treatise of the Duty of
HEAVENLY MEDITATION.

IN

Answer to the Exceptions of

GILES FIRMIN,

Against some things in that Treatise concerning
MEDITATION.

PUBLISHED

the satisfaction of many sincere Christians;
troubled at their inability to perform that Duty as
the said Author (and some others with him) have
described it and charged it.

By GILES FIRMIN.

Printed in the Year 1672.

MEDITATIONS

M. BAXTER

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Printed in New York

Meditations upon the Christian Duty of Meditation.

THAT Gospel-Conversion, and Gospel-Conversation are not things so easie as carnal-gospellers take them to be, the dayly experience of sincere converts, do sufficiently testifie. To make these more *easy* than God hath made them, is very dangerous, and of destructive consequence to the souls of men. To make them more *difficult* than God hath made them, is to lay a block in the way of the unconverted, and very injurious to the really converted. So it is, what Calvin saith in another case. *Valde periculosum est antioqueas induere conscientias, quam quibus Verbo Dei stringantur.*

Whither some holy men, whose names are very precious in the Church of Christ, have not exceeded in the latter, I did in my Treatise of the *Real-Christian*, with honourable respects to their names, soberly consider, and I thought I might do it without any offence. For shall we serious Christians, that were in earnest for Heaven, and proving of ourselves, very sadly concluding against their regeneration, because we have not experienced such works, as such holy men have Preached and Printed must be in true converts; and others crying out, if this be a Duty that God requires, which such an eminent man, with earnestness of spirit calls for, then we must never come in Heaven, and shall not have the liberty, with the men of *Berea* to examine these things in the Scriptures, whether they agree with them or no?

Object. It may be you will say, *you should have concealed their names.* Ans. This is the Objection of those who never found that trouble in these points, which others have done: and possibly because they have not read the books with that application to their own hearts, which I thought to do. Let such hold their peace. For others who have felt the trouble, they will say, if I had left out their *Names*, I had left out the *strongest argument*. For they being men as of eminent parts and so of very high esteem with Christians. It was their *Names* that gave Authority to their Doctrines, and caused that trouble to divers serious Christians. For my part, had I met with such things in the works of other men; I could as easily have passed them over, as I do that of *Divinity*, which I meet with in young mens books, put forth in the heat of their affections: but

these being men so eminent, and all of them [except holy Mr. Perkins, dead before my time] known unto me, the high esteem I bear unto their names, made me to consider my self, and see whether in those particulars, they spake as God spake; for if so; not only my self, but the greatest number of those who go for sound Christians [a hundred for one] must all begin again.

Besides I could not well tell how to refer my Reader to the Pages of a book, or give him my reply to a Letter written to me as an answer to what I had objected against such a point in the book, without the naming of the Authors, But were all mens names treated with that honour I have done theirs, I think there would be no complaint.

Obj. *Why did you not write while they were living.*

Ans. 1. While they lived, I was but a novice in the study of Divinity as a Minister. 2. I did write to Mr. *Shepherd*, and give you an account of it. 3. I found after their death, more experience of the trouble those points had caused. 4. I know they have successors, able to answer, if Christ and his Apostles did so Preach.

Towards the close of my book, I touched upon *Meditation*, which I saw by a person of eminent abilities, was driven to such a height, made so difficult, and yet charged with such vehemency, that many serious Christians, being not able to come neer it, were rather scared and discouraged, then drawn unto their Duty. The question therefore I discussed was this.

Q. *Whether every day, as duly as we Pray, so we must set a part one hour, or half an hour for the duty of Meditation: and more especially in meditating of the joyes of Heaven: and making it for that time our whole work, and intermix other matters with it no more, then we would do with Prayer?*

Who was the Author, I mentioned not so much as one Letter of his name, but only that a *Learned and Reverend Author* had delivered it. Mr. *Baxter* takes himself to be that Learned and Reverend Author meant, and vindicates himself, his Book, I saw not till August 1671. I drew up my reply to it, so soon as I saw it, but was not determined to publish it till now: which I am the more enduced to, from the consideration of the great complaints I have heard Christians make against themselves about this duty of *Meditation*, especially upon their hearing of some mens Sermons, and reading some books upon it. If God requireth that Duty of us, said some, as Mr. *Baxter* doth, we must not go to Heaven. Another Reverend Divine I see requiring at least half an hour, for young beginners, and one hour for others: another giving twenty heads in the
expli.

Application of the Duty, being requisite to the right performance of the Duty, I presume these heads will require meditation also, and thus we shall make the Duty difficult indeed, at last. I very much honour the gifts and graces of these worthy men. But when I considered the Christians who complain they cannot come up to these men, I observed they were warm in their work [not the lazy sort of Professors] of good understanding in the things of God: serious attenders upon all the Ordinances of God; in publick, private, and kept their communion with God in secret Prayer, and Reading. Savoury and Spiritual in their conversation, beautified their Profession: walked humbly and believingly with God, yea very submissively, under afflicting Providences; very busie about clearing out their state, &c. I thought with my self, can all these things be done without *Meditation*? I know they cannot be, what then is the matter of their trouble? *They cannot fix their thoughts, especially for an hour, or half hour, upon one spiritual object, without other thoughts intermixing, which is the meditation these worthy men call for.*

The question then is not, whether *Meditation* be a Christian Duty, I said enough for that in my Treatise, and only add. I will as soon believe a man can be a true Christian without *meditation*, as without *Prayer*. But the question is of *meditation*, as it is stated in the question; whether that be the duty which God commands his people? That Mr. *Bax*, hath charged it as the Duty, and that of persons of the meanest capacity, Pag. Edition 1st, where he summs up all his large discourse about *meditation*, is very 4th. plain. I shall come to it presently.

It is very true, when I read with what earnestness you press the Duty, ^{hope sir,} ^{Veronius} [your own words, p. 146. Edit. 4th.] I called for the *Scripture*, to prove the Duty [as you had described it and pressed it] to be the command of God. You had charged the *Conscience* of your Reader with it, p. 251. with his I hope you will not bind the *Conscience* but by *Scripture*. This is that *perfect Law* 19. *Psal.* 7. This is, *Able to make the man of God perfect.* 2. *Am.* 3. 16. 17. If I charge Duty towards God upon a Christian, I will ^{am a-greed,} ^{you} ^{have} ^{spared} ^{your Au-} ^{thor I} ^{read} ^{him} go first to my *Reason* to prove it: but if the *Scriptures* will not furnish me sufficiently, and make me *perfect*, for my proof, the Duty being might either *expressly* mentioned in the true *Sense* of the *Scripture*, or deduced by *necessary and infallible consequence* from *Scripture*, I will cease charging such a Duty upon Christians. If the *Scripture* speak it, I am sure there is *Reason*, but my *Reason* will not always prove *Scripture*-reasonable. I observe what you say p. 12. of the *Light* of *Nature*, the *Law* of *Nature*. But Sir, neither your *Reasons* nor my *Reasons* will prove a Duty as the *Law* of *Nature* will do. Men differ much in their *Reasons*. *Quot* since. *quis, &c*

To take a clearer view of your Book, I will draw it into this method, I will consider

1. The *Subject* of meditation.
2. The *Object* of meditation.
3. The *Time* of meditation.
4. *Intermixed thoughts* in meditation.
5. *Methodical-meditation*.

These are the things I find in your book, about which our apprehensions differ something, but I hope in the conclusion will agree.

As for that accurate method in the Lords Prayer, unto which method we are so bound, that if we observe it not, we sin, p. 9. 29. I understand it not, therefore I admire it, and can say nothing to it, but I dare say there will be a sin brought to light, which the world never heard of before.

First then for the *Subject*, the Persons who are bound to meditate. I read, p. 8. you charge me with *Unrighteous dealing*, that I had carried it, as if you had made that manner [of meditation stated in the Question] to be all mens, or most mens Duty. And below in the same page thus, *You see I make it not so much as a Duty to any that have not Ability and convenience*. That, p. 4. 5. 6. you had said this will not prove every mans Duty, *Servants, Poor, the children of poor and carnal Parents* are exempted.

Hold a little I pray Sir, what do you mean by *Ability*? for I find none exempted, but *melancholy persons, and some weak headed women*, p. 28. I suppose you exempt these upon that score: but I am confident we shall find thousands of sincere Christians besides such, that are *unable* to hold their thoughts fixed to one Heavenly object, for one hour, or half hour, without other thoughts intermixed, as you have charged them.

e. What is the reason Sir, that in this Treatise against me, you have put in *Ability* seven times, and not *once*, in your large discourse about it, that I can find, pardon me if it be, it slips my eye. I looked for it narrowly where you summe up all, and there you take notice of *Convenience*, for the *poor man, and servant*, but not of *Ability*. Had you there mentioned it *once*, and given a fair interpretation of it, I question whether you had ever read a line of mine about it.

But do you indeed *not* make it the Duty of *most men*, nor of *any* that have not *Ability*, &c? then why doth my good Brother charge me with so horrible a crime in the next page 9. *I like not the reducing the Rule, to our impotent sinful natures, nor to our crooked Lives*. Truly Sir, no more do I, for it is a great sin. But,

1. If this be not a Duty to *most men*, nor to any *unable*, &c, as you say,

[and it is the case of thousands of sincere Christians *Unable* to come to your Rule, that I plead] then there is no *Rule* to such, if there be a *Rule* to such, then I am sure it is their *Duty*. How then do I reduce *Gods Rule* to our *sinful Natures*, when there is no *Rule* at all?

2. If *Gods Rule* doth impose the duty as you do, why then did you not direct me to that *Rule*, when I called for *Scripture*, to prove the Duty as you imposed it to be *Gods Command*: but instead of *Scripture*, you give me *your reason*. Before I would have charged my Brother with such sin, I think I were bound, both as Minister and Christian, to have given him clear *Scripture proof* for the point I had asserted, which he questioned for want of *Scripture proof*, and which he called for, but this was far from. True Sir, you do bring one *Scripture* to prove what is *never* in the question: and another to prove something in the question; how aptly, I will examine both in their place: But still the main error or pinch of the question is left destitute of *Scripture*; yet thus you have charged me.

To say you brought it as an *Argument* against me, yea Sir, if you did not leave out the Principal verb, or rather, the main propositions unproved, viz. That *your Rule* is *Gods Rule*, till you have proved this, I pray your *Argument* into a *Syllogisme*, and see how finely it will run.

And now Sir, for my *unrighteous dealing*, as to the *Subject*.

First, I pray how do you agree with your self? for p. 145. you press The Reader, to the practise of this Duty thus. *Else thou dost frustrate Subject chief design, and makest me lose the chief of my labour*, be who will of meditation. This is your *Argument*, but in vain it seems to most men, p.

As you tell us, *The want of this Duty, is the cause why men digest not, and profit not by Sermons*. For want of meditation I think so too, and before exempt none, p. 251. you say, *you bring it down to the meanest quality*, and charge even such at the end of the Paragraph, *If thou wilt not do it, do not read it*; I read no exemption of such in the Paragraph. Then you set down the Duty. The summ is this. *As thou makest conscience of praying daily, so do thou of acting of thy graces in meditation, especially in meditating of the joyes of Heaven. To this end set a quarter of an hour or half an hour every day, &c. intermix other matters no more than it; then you would do in Prayer.* p. 153. in that you charge your Reader, *as he maketh conscience of Prayer daily, so &c.* here you put as much weight upon it, as upon Prayer, and bind the conscience to it; but I will say that Prayer is not a Duty for all persons, be they poor, servants, melancholy persons, or unable, all having the use of Reason are bound to it, but if your Reasons will serve to save them from the Duty of Meditation, they will as well from Prayer,

2. Let

2. Let us consult *Holy writ*, which must determine you and me. The grand Text for meditation is 1 *Psal.* 2. in other Scriptures we find *David* putting this Rule into practise, now this Text exempts not *servants*, or *poor*, or, *most* men, but *that* person that will be *blessed*, be what he will, here is his Duty, he must meditate in the Law of God day and night. I know no Text that warrants me to teach such distinctions of meditation, whereof one is not the Duty of *All* men or *most* men. Another is the Duty of *All* men. Therefore I stated the question according to the Scripture.

3. Though *Rich* men and *Masters*, having more time and liberty may be more frequent in Religious duties, yet it is not the having the most time and liberty, which will make a man *Able* to meditate, and to continue in the Duty: but *Ability* is *All* in this point, and that depends.

1. I may say something upon the constitution of the body, some being of a more *volatile*, some of a more *fixed* constitution.

2. Upon the strength of the *invention*, being able to expatiate upon a subject, which though but a common gift, yet is very essential to the length of meditation which the question speaks of.

3. Upon the degree of *grace* infused, the more the *will* and *affections* are sanctified, the work is the easier.

4. Upon the degree of the *gracious* and *assisting* presence of the Spirit, of God: who being the first cause in *Nature* and *Grace*, acts both the common gift of the *Invention*, and the special gift of *grace*, influencing the soul most graciously, in what degree he pleaseth.

Hence, a *poor* man may be much more able to meditate than a *Rich* man, a *Servant* more able than his *Master*, many *women* more able than many *men*, because the *invention*, the *grace*, the *assistance* of Gods spirit, may be much more in the *Poor*, *Servants*, *Women*, than in the *rich*, *master*, or *men*. So the exemption you have made in the Subject is groundless, for as for *conveniency*, you tell the *poor* man, and the *servant*, they may do it when they are about their *labours*, p. 252.

The Object of our Meditation 2. For the Object of meditation. It is the whole word of God, So faith the Text, 1 *Psal.* 2. In his Law he meditates.

There is not one particular Object which the Scripture hath bound us up unto, that upon this you must meditate every day. The varieties of Providences, temptations, the state, condition and frame of the Soul, with several things, make differences here, why then should we fine Christians to one object every day; I take notice of your words p. 311 *What ever else I think of, of Christ, of Scripture, of Promises, of Threatnings, of Sin, of Grace, &c. If I leave out Heaven and make it not the chief part of my meditation, I leave out the sense and life of all.* Thus from your

Duty of Meditation.

ample and experience, you prove that *Heavens joyes and rest*, must be the *Object* of our Meditation every day, and is this sufficient I pray, to charge a Duty upon Christians in that manner you have done?

Believe it Sir, we that are of the low form in the School, can find nothing in our Meditations upon our dear *Christ*, the *Promises*, the *Scriptures*, and *Grace*, that could we but experience them in our hearts, we would not fear but we should find *Joy* upon earth abundantly, a becoming of Heaven, though we do not meditate upon the *joyes and rest* a coming: and I must profess to you again, unless I can in some good measure experience them, the thoughts of *Rest a coming*, afford little joy and satisfaction.

There may be much *heavenly-mindedness*, though the Soul doth not fully meditate upon the *Joyes and Rest* that shall be in Heaven every day.

The cheif and main thing an unconverted person should meditate upon, his sinful and miserable state he is in, out of Christ. Yet I deny not, that the *Joyes and Rest* in Heaven are an object, for the unconverted and the converted, though not assured of their conversion, to meditate upon, so that you might have spared your Arguments, p. 25. 26. 27. I know not who oppose you, the great difference you mention is none at all.

Yet this I say again, Christians that are pressed with the sense of guilt, the continual assaults of impetuous and strong corruptions, cannot redemption applyed, cannot experience the Gospel, and Christ in execution of all his offices, though they seek and wait for help: These Christians will have little pleasure to think of *Rest and Joyes* in Heaven, they will more increase their sorrows, for want of a title apprehended. That hath nothing but an *hereafter* [which rather terrifies to think of] because his hungry will at present, will be as well pleased as a man who is hungry indeed, and you give him nothing at present to satisfy, but leave him to this to meditate upon, he shall have a rich feast three Moneths hence, but till then he must fast.

Though a person be not able to fix his thoughts half a quarter of an hour upon one spiritual object, but his mind is moving up and down from one spiritual object to another, but yet out of every object or flower he takes honey and carries it to his spiritual hive, this person doth answer the command as truly, as he that can keep them fixed an hour, for he still is *waiting in the law*, 1 *Psalm*. 2. by what Rule Ministers try up Christians to one only object at a time in the performance of the Duty of Meditation, I know not.

Meditations upon the Christian

Thirdly,
The time
of Medi-
tation,

3. For the *Time* of meditation, your Rule saith, *an hour, or half an hour*, and here lay the main liess of the Question.

Sir, I have nothing to say against *two, three, six* houres, if God hath given to others such large *inventions*, strength of *grace*, and *assistance* of his Spirit: but I hope it is no part of my sinful nature, to which I reduce Gods Rule, that I have not such a large *invention* as Mr. Baxter hath, which I must have before I or any other can perform the Duty according to your Rule.

This is it I mislike, that where as the wisdom of God hath determined no time, we cannot rest in his wisdom, but must determine the duty to *an hour, or half hour*, as you and another worthy Divines have done after you, p. 5. I see you have quoted 1 *Psalm*. 2. and 119. *Psalm*. 97. for meditation. But Sir, those Texts do as strongly prove that meditation must be *All the day*, as they prove meditation to be a Duty, and from those Texts I will as well prove that Meditation must be *twelve* hours, as you can prove it must be *one* hour, and add but this also which you have charged that there be *no intermixing of any other thoughts*, then we have a hard Duty indeed. But I know David did govern his Kingdome, and his Army, and had many other thoughts, about other Objects then spiritual. So that we must have an interpretation given of the Texts, and such a one as I am sure must not determine *hours, or half hours, or quarters*. For pag. 16, 17. you give me a Syllogism to prove your determination, and tell me you will not give me a Text for the Conclusion,

Sir Syllogisms are not all on your side. But for your Syllogisme what doth it prove more then I had said before? that a Christian endeavours should be, to get his affections wound up to a *suitableness* to the object he is meditating upon, that so the end may be attained. this you acknowledge, p. 22. I had said, and must I determine *one hour or half hour* for this? It may be it may cost *two* hours, a man may have such woful struggling with his corrupt heart that he cannot get up, it may be another time a quarter, half a quarter may do, I determine no time, my reason is, and therein I shall answer the question you have given me, p. 22. [I know not how to interpret it else] how happy a heart have you that will so easily be got up. Sir, O Sir, how corrupt a heart I have I feel, but though I have not your pure grace, yet I have so much acquaintance with the waves of God, that I know the Spirit of God may and doth sometimes, give in that to a man in a quarter or half quarter of an hour, or less, which may cost him several hours another time, and many Prayers, but cannot reach it, and you think there are none of the people of God will joyn with me, in your Essay?

I observe you, p. 18. while you prove the defining of the time not to be presumptuous (as you term it) you put this question to me, Suppose I say I am master of a family, you that have Ability, may do well, *you it is your own time* [once a day, &c.] To set some time apart to speak methodically to your family: would you call for a Text to prove this duty? I will give you, 6. 7. 8. and Deut. 11. &c.

To which I answer, I observe two words in your Argument, which I will prove you guilty of Sophistry. 1. Here *Ability* is expressed & required, which was not in the Question: and of this before 2. Your Argument saith, *some time*, but the question saith an *hour* or *half hour*, the time is determined to one of these, but doth he that saith, *some time*, imagine or define any part of time? what follows this is you know, I say it not. Hold to the Question Sir, I observe p. 23. you argue against me from a like absurdity in a Learned Physician, that said: *What is all this ado in Preaching, when all is dispatched in three words, think, and speak well, and do well.*

Sir, you must go on, and make your Argument full to answer me, viz. that as he said, *so he did speak well, he did think well, and did well*, your Argument is lame, for you confess I had said the *end and effect of Meditation must be attained*. Pag. 22. If he did as he said, where was the absurdity? so where is mine? Sir here is more Sophistry in your argu-

Question you put to me p. 22. *If a Christians affections be brought to a sensibleness to the object, and so the essence of the Duty is attained, do you regard nothing in duty but the essence? nothing at all the integrity?* &c. I answer,

Integrity, where the *end and effect* are attained, there are all the parts: then the *integrity* of the duty cannot be denyed: unless you will contend about the Logical notion of *integrum*, as being *Argumentum a primo*, and *Symbolum effecti*, as the members are *Symbola causae*, which signifie nothing in this point.

For the *Degree*, the goodness of a duty doth not consist so much in length of time that a person takes up in the performance of it, then in that he prays three hours and preach four hours dully, be esteem'd an excellent Preacher.

Why did you not put *two* hours or *few*, when you charged the person your Reader? for this would be a higher degree than *one* degree was the thing you aim'd at.

But good Sir, let sincere Christians have first such inventions as you [which must be if the length make the degree] let them have the strength of grace, and assistance of the Spirit. Let not him that hath

five Talents and can improve them, make his improvement a Rule for him that hath but *one* Talent or *two* Talents, when these are faithful in improving *two* or but *one*. Because they are *unable* to hold long, therefore they endeavour to be *frequent*, and *often* to it; (as I said, and shall have occasion to mind you of these words presently.)

4. If one meditate *two* hours, but he comes not up to the *end* of meditation which he ought, another meditates one quarter of an hour, and attains the *end* which is best?

I find p. 14. you make an argument against me from what I had said my self, *viz. that if a man can thus meditate ten hours, he is the happier man and had cause to bless God.* Therefore say you, *it is some mens Duty.*

I answer. Had you charged none with the *Duty*, but those who were *Able* to do it, as you describ'd it, you had said something now, and it's possible I had said nothing at all, but your discourse ran generally to your Reader, through of the meanest capacity, and your exceptions I have before considered.

2. I shall yet deny your *Consequence*. A man prays this day *two* hours, therefore, it is his duty to pray once *every* day *two* hours, nay if it were to charge it once a week to be his duty, having *Ability* and *Convenience*, Preach it, or Print it who will, nor I, lest when I be called to prove it, I should say to him, *I shall give no Text but a Syllogisme.*

3. It will not follow to be his *Duty*, every day thus to meditate, because that this day he could hold out *one* hour in medication, it was from the assistance of the good spirit, that helped his *invention*, and acted his *grace*. That good spirit is a free agent, will not give forth his assistance the next day, may be not next week or month, in that degree which he did this day. My duty is to pray for his assistance, but his *Assistance* is none of *my* duty. But it was that Assistance which made the duty this day thus to be performed, and that which makes Christians in their Duties, at one time differ so much from themselves another time: so like themselves: I appeal to Christians whether I write false Divinity in their experiences; we in the low form, Sir, are fain to own that good spirit, else we find untoward work.

I find pag. 12. and 17. You insist much upon an Argument from *Preaching one hour* [that's the Question] to *Meditation one hour*, and

at least I should deny the consequence, saying, *That Preaching is not of Divine Institution then Meditation, you say you deny it, no magis minus heer, &c.*

1. Answer, first, I ever thought that Preaching by Office, [and I know no Preaching properly so called, but is so] was a part of *Instituted Worship*, but that *Meditation* is a part of *Instituted worship*, I never saw any Divine that would say it. I cannot understand that *Meditation* is *Worship* properly, when I examine my self I must do it by *Meditation*, But is God the immediate Object of that Act, as I think he is in *Worship*.

2. What Sir, must we Preach as frequently as we must Meditate? and must we Preach *day and night, and all the day*, as we must meditate?

3. Because when I Preach to a multitude, some, Atheists, Erroneous, Hereticks, others very ignorant and weak, doubtful, dead in sin, &c. Therefore I must labour to enlighten, Convince, Confute, instruct, and divers things must fall in, that I may come to the end of my work [if it be possible] and this will cost so convenient time that I must dunt my Auditory, must I needs run over these Topicks, when I am in Meditation with my self? possibly when I hear a man preach, I understand the point, the reasons &c. as well as himself: my heart is possibly so convinced of the goodness of the thing, that it saith, I am in no need of your Reasons to convince me, or motives to draw me to consent; I consent already: *give me the thing* saith my will, and it is not be the same at home in my Meditation? and yet must I require of men as much time at home in Meditation as a Minister in Preaching?

Text of Scripture you tell me you will not, [because you cannot] come but your Reasons, and what I pray are those Reasons you have for me as strong and clear for *one hour* or half, every day in meditation, as the *Law of nature* you tell me of? Let the Learned Reader judge.

To conclude this Head you tell me: *By all this I conjecture, that you are a gentle censurer of Ministers that Preach short and seldome: and that you are of those that are short and seldome in instructing their family, &c.* p. 24. before this p. 17. thus, *If short and seldome Preaching to others be all any Preachers duty; murmur not that you are silenced, but wise to forbear to spare the Bishops the labour and odium and to silence themselves, their long unnecessary Sermons.*

I pray, Brother, what do you mean by this? I shall return no answer but let the Reader judge of it, only as there is another charge of something like sin, let me clear my self if I can.

Sir, had you but so much charity to have suspended your *Conjectural-censure*, till you had enquired any way, of the Parish or corner where I Preached, whither in my *pastor* (which is the best proof of a *man's* opinion) I was such a *seldome* and *short* Preacher, I doubt not but you would have met with a loud consultation.

2. I pray whence do you draw this conjecture? I hope from those words but five or six lines below the words which you have transcribed in the same Paragraph. I had been speaking of Meditation when it had attained its end, and if the end be attained, then my words are these, *If this Meditation for the time be not a quarter of an hour, or half quarter, but often in a day [as those who are plagued with their hearts, are put upon these meditations frequently] will not this Meditation answer the Scriptures meditation, &c.*

I pray Mr. Baxter, are *often frequent* and *seldome*, Synonoma's? did not I expressly use the words, and yet will you conclude me to be a *gentle censurer* [a little softer word for a *Favourer*] of *seldome* Preaching? Sir, I leave it with your own conscience.

For *length or shortness* of Preaching, instruction of Families, and Prayer, &c. they ought so to be performed, as become the Majesty of God, and may most conduce to their end. Ordered with such prudence, that the affections of people, servants, children, be not made dull, and discouraged from attending upon ordinances, through tedious and imprudent prolixity: Let the Appetite and affections be kept up. This I am sure agrees with Scripture, 5 *Eccles.* 2, in the first place, then with Reason solid and sound. This hath been approved and practised, by holy and judicious men, I could name some of our own Divines, and among foreign Divines there wants not proof. The Churches of *Bohemia*, if credence may be given to the History of them [and why it should not I know not] had so much Gospel-simplicity amongst their members as is not to be found, but in few Churches. In those Churches the longest Sermon on the Sabbath, was not above one hour, with the Ordinance of singing joyned to it. It was a Law amongst them, that long Sermons should be avoided, lest people should loath their spiritual food. So *Comenius* tells us, *Hoc potius legis iustar est, ut concionum prolixitas vitetur, ut volumus in audicionibus fastidium in other exercises, but half an hour at a time.*

The Author of the book, Entituled, *Sacrilegious desertion*, of the holy *Scripture* rebuked [it may be Mr. Baxter knows the Authors name] pag.

Exhorts the Non-Conformists in some Parishes to Preach but once a week, telling them, people cannot hear and digest three Sermons in a day; and in the end of that Paragraph, tells them, it is Preaching well, to affect such people, then Preaching Long and Often. I am of the same opinion with this worthy Author, and wish that as Satan sometimes plays his game, while he puts on some Christians [especially young men] to be often at Prayer, thereby to tire them out; so that he may not play his game in that so often Preaching, in the great City, and other places, many Hearers at last proving no other then *Gluttons* and *Drunkards*. But shall I say of this Author, what a friend is he to *Seldom* and *Short* Preaching? that speaks against *Long* and *Often* Preaching? I come to the fourth head. *The intermixing other matters in the time of performance of the Duty, no more then in Prayer, of this you tell me pag.* ^{4th.} *you oft mention it.* ^{Head In} ^{termix-}

I pray Sir, how often is *once*? excepting in the question where I must say, because you had so charged it, p. 153. but else I find not that I wrote it above *once*, and there with just complaint against my self, for my fickleness, inconstancy, of my quicksilver thoughts; but I oppose not that I see, only in the end of my Paragraph, I spake doubtfully, whether they did crowd in, they were as sinful, as in Prayer, you have charged your Reader as much against them in *Meditation*, as in *Prayer*. I annexed my Reason, because, Prayer was such Divine worship that we should therein *immediately* with God; but in meditation we do not always immediately with God. I may have many thoughts of God, when yet I cannot be said to worship God in those thoughts, they immediately terminate in my self, to help me on in my christian life and warfare. Now to my reason you give me no answer at all. I am a serious Christian, that would carelessly, willingly, admit other things to hinder the end he aims at in Meditation. But whether they do bring do prove thoughts crowding in, to be as sinful as in Prayer, for this was the question I will consider. Your Text is *Eccles. 9. 10. Cover thy hand findeth to do, &c.* The sense of the Text must first be understood into. Now, ^{of the} ^{on work} ^{but} ^{banish as in}

Here I find Mr. *Cartwright*, Mr. *Pembble*, and *Janius* as I understand by his Notes on the 7. v. (with him) take this verse with some verbiage, to be the language of the Epicure, Mr. *Cartw.* in his *Answer* seems to carry it smoothly, these are men of no small note, and if it is nothing to the purpose.

2. Though they be not the Epicures words, yet the Phrase, *wharso-*
Quic- ever thy *hand findeth*, needs explication, for the *hand to find a thing*, is for
quid ali- a man to have a thing in his *power*, his hand can *grasp it* he is able to do
let, in sua it, 'tis in his hand, hence the vulgar render it, *quodcumq; facere potest ma-*
habere nus tua, and though the Syriak word signifieth *invenit*, as well as *potuit*,
mans yet the Translator, render it by *potuit*. Hence the *Calde* apply it to gi-
aut manu ving of Alms: because a Rich mans *hand* hath wherewithal, he
invenire hath the power, add the *will*. Thus if we compare Texts [the best way of
dicatur. interpretation] 25, *Levis.* 26. 28. in both the verses the word *Able* as
Lorinus we translate, the Hebrew words are the same in this Text, *His hand hath*
in Text, found, &c. or, *His hand hath not found sufficiency*, that makes him able
 thus again. *Iudg* 9. 37. latter end. Do as thy *Hand shall find*, the same
 words, but now are spiritual things, the things of eternal concernment,
 within our *grasp*? have our *hands found* them? &c. When I was in
 the Ministry, I had a desire to have handled the Text, in reference to
 spiritual things, but upon serious weighing the Text, I laid by my
 thoughts: to have very good things spoken from a Text, and the Text
 not the true mother of the children, I did not like it.

3. But make the most you can, it will amount to seriousness and dili-
 gence in Meditation, but it will not prove that *by-thoughts creeping in are*
as sinful as in Prayer: and that is the question.

Now I come to the last, your *Methodical Meditation*, a new notion
 that I never met with before, and no part of the question.

That there must be a serious pondring of things in the understanding,
 before we can apply them to our hearts, so as to have our hearts wrought
 up to a suitableness with the objects we meditate upon, is very true: and
 if this were all you meant by *Methodical meditation*, it would be yielded
 the act is not *Rational* without it. But I see you have other notions, as
 your argument from Preaching declares, p. 12. where you tell me, *Me-*
ditation is a preaching to our selves, and therefore look what order is in pre-
aching, the same may be in Meditation; and here you run through all the parts
of a Sermon, and for this Duty you give me a Text to prove it, *1 Cor.* 14.
ult. Let all things be done in order, p. 11th.

Sir, I think that is *orderly Meditation*, and tending to edification,
 which I have mentioned, and I know no other order. Here I perceive
 you put in *Ability* again. But why I pray do you bring a Text to prove a
 Duty, and tell us what is *orderly Preaching*, and then when you apply
 it to Meditation say that order *may be in Meditation, which is a preaching*
to our selves? I doubt it *must be*, if the Text will prove what you bring it
 for,

and there be no orderly preaching but what you have set down. Do
 which command duty, prove only *May bee's*? but to the Text,
 which is but the general conclusion of the 11, 12, and 14. Chapters, le-
 against the *undecency* and *disorder* among the *Corinthians*, of which
 in those Chapters. And this is a standing Rule for all Churches,
Church-Arts, in all Ages, that Order be observed. In our interpre-
 of Scriptures, the scope, the circumstances, and series of the Text,
 went before and what followes, must be the guide for interpreta-
Hilari saith true, *Intelligentia dictorum, ex causis sumenda est di-*
 this is very clear to any man that reads the Chapters, but *Medi-*
 was not in the least the subject of the Apostles discourse before,
 Church-affairs.

This Order was such as might be seen, [as was their disorder, in
 11, and 14 Chap.] or come under the cognizance of others who be-
 them. Had Paul been present bodily in the Church of the *Colossians*
 might have seen the order, 2 Col. 5. *Beholding your order*. True, Paul
 he was with them in spirit beholding their Order, &c. how he could
 their carriage in the exercise of Church-discipline [so I perceive
 understand this order] 1080. miles with his eyes, Rome being so far
 as some say, I know not; but had he been present as *Epaphras*
 [and from whom as some think he had his relation] he could have
 as *Epaphras* did. I can see Order in an Army in the field, *vide*
in vocabulum est, & denotat cohortem militum instructam, & ordine
in obsequio. But can Paul or any man behold the *inmanent acts* of
 [as Medication is] in another person? then he could not see
 or disorder there.

This Text admits of no such limitations as *Ability* and *opportunity*.
 the sense must run thus, *Let all things be done in order, if you have A-*
and opportunity. So that if this Text have any respect to Meditation,
 small without limitations; will this save the disorder in Churches,
 of *Ability*? are not Churches bound to order unless they have *Abi-*
 but you bind none by the Text, but those that have it.

For the blame you seem to lay upon me, p. 15. *that I had not read*
the writings, in which you had added limitations, &c. Sir, I read a
 which had four times passed the Press, and you might have corrected
 same cause, but I see you have not in the 9th. Edition by what you
 the; and what you tell me out of your other books do as little
 To read all your books, would cost me more money, then I can
 to buy them, but much less should I find time to read them.
 all the world, that I am but a gentle censurer of *follies* and *short*

Preaching &c. [how truly let the Reader judge] but had you added *short writings*, I assure you, I would not have censured you at all, but rather thanked you for them. You tell me p. 16. *I should understand your writings before I oppose them*, which it seems I did not, because I suppose that which you wrote of the Common necessity of the meditation of Heaven, to be written also, to prove or urge the same necessity of the length or method.

Truly Sir, I am not so simple but I understand what an *hour* or *half hour* is; which in the *brief sum* of all your discourse, you charge your Reader with. I think you intend as you write.

2. If *length* be nothing, why am I judged a gentle censurer, of *short Preaching* by you, and repeat *shortness* so often?

3. Why do your Syllogisme endeavour to prove, the *hour* or *half hour*, [or *quarter*, which now you put in]? this is all I meddle with, but what the *Length* or *Method* is of your discourse, I did not so much as think of it, nor had the least respect to it; therefore I doubt you are mistaken much in this.

No duty that God requires, but the performance of it hath a tendency to our salvation. So hath this of *Meditation*; and if God requires the performance of it, in that *manner* you have charged, and that as we make conscience of Prayer daily, then we must endeavour to perform it in every particular, as you have described it: else our hopes of Salvation will be shaken.

But how did I *invite* you to a Review, as your *Title* speaks, when I never mentioned one letter of your Name, and another hath required of you, an *hour* or *half hour*, and that Heaven may well be an *Object* none deny; this made all that I meet with, wonder to see my name put in your Title page.

And now Reverend Sir, [whose graces and gifts I do highly honour] I have given you as clearly as I can, an account of those heads, in which our apprehensions seemed to differ; but if that be *All* which you desire as to this Meditation, viz. to understand and practise these two Texts *Mat. 6. 21. Phillip. 3. 20.* As you tell me, p. 30. I assure you I am fully agreed with you: and never shall there be one line more written by me in opposition to you. I am sure we are *All* bound to have our conversation in Heaven, where our treasure is, there will our hearts be, without any limitations to *Ability* and *opportunity*, the Duty bind *All*!

Let me but have a few words to the serious, and sincere Christians, who are much troubled about this Duty, and I have done; what is the reason of your trouble, and discouragement from this Duty more than

any other, is it because you cannot *Meditate*? are you not mistaken? are you not in this Duty, as you do about Prayer, when you hear another pray one hour or two together, fluent in expression, various in matter, warm in affections, you cannot pray, no not you, when your prayers may be as acceptable to God as his, though you cannot pray half an hour, is it not the same in Meditation? I grant Meditation is not a task for Hypocrites, no more then secret Prayer. I speak of *Prayer*, indeed: such as *call upon God in truth*. 145. *Psal.* 18. Such secret Prayer will either beat the mans Lust out, or his Lust will beate secret Prayer. So it will be with Meditation, if a man meditates indeed.

But do you not Meditate? as I said in the beginning, I know some men, very diligent in reading the Holy Scriptures, so as the word of God dwells richly in you, *Coll.* 3. 16. I know you to be those who are men in heart-searching, very fearful of Hypocrisie. I know you to be very serious in attending upon all the Ordinances of God, desiring and labouring to improve them to your spiritual growth; I know you to be very zealous, you relish the things of Heaven; I know you to be very careful of offending God, I know you to be in a great measure crucified to the world. I know you humble, and low before God, submissive to his afflicting hand, or very much chiding your own hearts if they do not grumble, and earnestly begging for the sanctified fruit of your afflictions; ask I pray those worthy and holy men, whose Sermons and talks about meditation have so troubled you, whether, there can be without Meditation? with honour to those worthy Divines, I should examine that Sermon, or book very well, what that Doctrine is, that cause offence, and sad the hearts of such as these, and make sure it hath a Divine impression upon it, else I should be blame worthy.

Oh, But I cannot fix my thoughts one hour, or half hour, no not a quarter.

Answer. What then? which Command of God do you break? hath God said down hours, or half hours? Let us hear the Text. But though you cannot fix so long, yet,

1. Have you not the *favour* of the thing upon your spirit which you are meditating upon, is there not some suitableness left between your mind and the Object, for the time, though you are but short?

2. Are not your thoughts *often* in a day upon one or other spiritual Object? what though you cannot stay long upon one, but going off to another, like the Bee, but still gathering Honey, what then, what will this want of Grace, obedience to a command? let them name it, that

affirm it, it seems you are meditating in the law.

3. If there ariseth a suspicion of Hypocrisie, if some vile corruption be stirring, if *fear* be up, or *love* enlarged from apprehensions of Gods love, then you can fix for longer time, though I will not say with no other thoughts intermixed.

4. Prayer is an easier Ordinance then fixing the thoughts in meditation to one object: but what if you cannot pray one hour or half an hour at a time every day, what then? you do pray and that seriously; let them who will blame you for not praying so long every day, at one time, prove where God hath bound his people to such length of time every day in Prayer, if not in Prayer why in *meditation*. Look to thy self, that thou beest serious in all, labour to attain the end of duties.

5. I observe that your conversations are day and night in some measure becoming your profession [I know you have your infirmities] then certainly you do *meditate day and night* in the Law of God, else I know not how you come to have your conversations so ordered, whether you meditate by half quarters, or quarters, or half-hours, or two hours, I know not, nor do I regard as to any command that binds you to this or that set time or place.

Why then Christian art thou troubled more about this Ordinance then other Ordinances. I know we have cause to be troubled, that in every ordinance we come not up to that holiness the ordinance require, and there I joyn with you.

How persons that are uniform in their conversations, who except against no command or duty, but have *respect* to all the Commandments, 119. *Psal.* 6. are serious in all other Ordinances, and there not so much blamed, come to be so tardy, and so much blamed in this of meditation, I could not well tell: supposed that work of grace in their hearts, and that good spirit dwelling in them, would carry them on in the practise of this Duty, as well as the other, unless it were that worthy men did strain this Duty in some circumstances beyond what the word of God hath done. Is there nothing that enables one man to be longer in a Duty, but meerly Grace in the heart of one man more then another; in which though God will shew his good pleasure in giving to one a larger measure then another; yet as for *Grace*, you will say, that is alike required of all, and our fault it is if we fall short.

But is there nothing else I say but *Grace*? Is there not something that is not properly *Grace*, but of a more common nature, a common gift, strength and largeness of invention, fixedness of constitution, besides the presence of that good spirit, who commonly doth give out his assistance

ing to his former gifts to the creature; whether those gifts be Com-
 mon or Special, I leave this to the piously learned to judge, there was
 none I hope imputed to him that had but two Talents, and increas-
 ed them but to four, not ten, 25. *Matth.* 22. 23. had he then had but
 one, been diligent, and increased but one, I doubt not of acceptance.

Besides consider we the several conditions most Christians are under,
 which are no small hindrances, some burnd with cares not easy to cast
 off, the husbandman when he carried on that which mend his ground,
 sowed, Sowed, &c. he is assured he hath performed his part right, as to
 the use of fit means to his end. But the Physician that hath life in hand,
 how is sure that he hath hit the cause of a Disease, and used the fittest
 means for his end. So the cares which others may ly under, variety of
 passions, and businesses, not pulled upon themselves neither by their
 wantonness, others their Callings cast them into all sorts of compa-
 ny, others great charge of children, low, and forced to hard labour to
 maintain them; others wofully, unequally yoked, and children it may
 be perverse; others in debt not able to pay; it peirced my heart, when
 I had been Preaching of *Faith*, one of my Auditors [who went for a
 profession] going from Church, being pressed with the temptation, burst
 out, *Faith will pay no debts*, said he, I deny not but he was to blame, for
 he had paid debts. No man can tell what the conditions and tempta-
 tions of others are, but those who have been under the same conditions
 and temptations every way circumstantiated. For Gods Rules they must
 be guarded, let mens conditions or temptations be what they will, but for
 Gods Rules which I perceive some of our late Reverend Divines, [whose
 names I highly honour] have pressed upon Christians very high for their
 practise, which if I were asked how I proved this were God's
 command, that all these Rules, as they are pressed, should be dayly practi-
 sed, I could not tell; for these Rules I have thought with my self, I
 could never press them or Print them my self, unless I had passed under
 these conditions and temptations, and experienced, how under these
 conditions and temptations I could practise these Rules my self, yet God
 will give that in to one under such a condition and temptation, which
 will be to another who is truly Gracious.

To conclude. As for the greatest part of sincere Christians, this is all
 I have to say, while we have bodies that call for Food, Raiment and
 such like; while we have our Callings to be employed in, and it is a mercy
 to have them, being not able alwayes to be feeding upon spiritual Ob-
 jects, while here we live among present sensible things, that our nature
 doth but desire, while we walk among temptations every where,
 while

...the Father by Faith in this last will, and while we have
...we continue in us but they are looking their foundation
...be loved more the Rich, to their hearts, that they be found in
...ness. Can they by Meditation, and all other Ordinances of
...goodness leading all into them, keep up grace in the present
...they get and maintain the upper hand of flesh, World and
...they will in the service of the Lord, and grow in the
...Christ, for my part, I will not press them with a multitude of
...which I know they cannot practise; nor shall I tell them how
...must be in Duties, whether they be serious, and labour to
...of all in Duties, for whom God hath given larger
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